

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Ana Region

May 31, 2002

ITEM: 16

SUBJECT: Appeal for an Exemption from the 30 Percent Maximum Slope Requirement for the Use Of a Subsurface Disposal System – Jim Palmer, Lot 20, Tract 2933 MB 52/94, Granite Place, Idyllwild Area, Riverside County, APN 564-071-010

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Jim Palmer represents the owner of a 0.22-acre parcel in the Idyllwild area of Riverside County. The owner proposes to construct a house on the property. As there is no sewer available, a septic tank-subsurface disposal system is proposed to serve the house. Mr. Palmer states that although the property is only 0.22 acres, the lot obtained approval in 1965. Regional Board staff has requested Mr. Palmer to submit proof that the lot was indeed approved for development in 1965. With this information, the lot would not be considered a new development subject to the minimum lot size requirement for septic system use that was adopted by the Regional Board.

Idyllwild is a mountainous area of the region. The lot has relatively steep slopes and the slope in the disposal area is approximately 40 percent. This slope meets Riverside County Department of Environmental Health guidelines; however, it does not comply with the Board's guidelines.

In 1979, the Regional Board adopted "*Guidelines for Sewage Disposal from Land Developments.*" These guidelines established minimum criteria for the use of individual disposal systems to prevent pollution or nuisance from discharges to leaching or percolation systems. These guidelines stipulate, in part, "*Natural or finished ground slope in the disposal area shall not be greater than 30 percent.*" When slopes in the disposal area are greater than 30 percent, the probability of sanitary wastes surfacing is much greater, thereby creating a threat of nuisance, pollution, and public health hazard.

At that time, the Board's "*Guidelines*" were consistent with those implemented by Riverside and San Bernardino County Health Department. However, both Counties have since updated their requirements in several areas. Both health departments now allow the installation of septic systems in areas of up to 45 percent slope, provided certain conditions are met (e.g., the greater the slope, the deeper the leach lines must be installed).

Mr. Palmer is unable to find a suitable location on his property for the disposal system with less than 30 percent slope. Therefore, he is appealing to the Board for an exemption to place his proposed system in an area between 30 and 45 percent slope (40 percent slope).

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Mr. Palmer's request for an exemption for this project for the use of an individual sewage disposal system, provided that (1) documentation is submitted that the project is not a "new development" as defined by the Board, and (2) the property owner obtains approval for the subsurface disposal system from Riverside County Department of Environmental Health.

Comments were solicited from the following agencies

State Water Resources Control Board, Office of Chief Counsel – Jorge Leon
Riverside County Department of Environmental Health – Sam Martinez/Greg Dellenbach
Riverside County Department of Building and Safety – Tom Ingram
Riverside County Department of Planning – Mark Balys